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FM AMEMBASSY BAMAKO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6308
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAMAKO 001198

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/24/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EFIN](#) [ECON](#) [ML](#)

SUBJECT: RPM FANS FEARS THAT TOURE PLANS PRESIDENCY FOR LIFE

REF: BAMAKO 01154

Classified By: POLITICAL OFFICER GLENN FEDZER FOR REASON 1.4 (b)

1.(C) SUMMARY: National Assembly President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (IBK) and his Rally for Mali (RPM) party have not quietly accepted political isolation by President Amadou Toumani Toure (ATT). His allies are responding with accusations that ATT plans to replace Malian institutions with cronyism and destroy the Malian tradition of political consensus. One RPM party leader said ATT intends to stack the National Assembly with friends in the next election with the ultimate goal of revising the constitution to become President for Life. The RPM is distributing bootleg copies of a controversial book highly critical of ATT's cronyism and the party's recent rhetoric likely reflects the approach the RPM will take throughout the presidential campaign. Although it is difficult to gauge IBK's popular support, there are no signs that the RPM's efforts will rally anyone new to its camp - or that any of ATT's allies would risk endangering their own political futures by jumping ship. Nor have we seen any evidence that ATT seeks to extend his mandate indefinitely via a revision to the Constitution. End Summary.

Let the Marginalization Begin...

¶2. (C) The Rally for Mali's (RPM) Secretary General Bocar Treta says President Amadou Toumani Toure (ATT) is "dangerous for democracy, dangerous for Mali, and dangerous for the region" because of ATT's "plan" to replace Mali's democratic institutions with a system built around him and his cronies. ATT's first move, according to Treta, was to marginalize the RPM in the National Assembly and the National Electoral Commission (CENI) (reftel). Treta expects that ATT will eventually supplant a functioning party system in the National Assembly by pushing trusted friends and allies into seats during next year's Assembly elections, regardless of these candidate's party affiliations. The new Assembly would then have a majority of "Friends of Amadou" willing to amend the constitution and extend ATT's presidential mandate indefinitely.

¶3. (C) Treta says the RPM will continue to fight its exclusion from the CENI in court, and refuse to take up the two seats offered by other parties (reftel). Treta wants the courts to invalidate the current CENI composition and replace it with one that allocates the CENI's 1st Vice Presidential post to the RPM. As for the National Assembly, Treta noted that by law, leadership posts should reflect party distribution, but the RPM has decided not to waste efforts on an organization that will be replaced in a year, following the 2007 legislative elections. Treta added that the RPM was concerned over the Malian Government's failure to agree on a unique ballot for the Presidential election or, as te GOM claimed, to open the electoral rolls to public scrutiny.
(Note: Despite RPM claims to the contrary, the electoral

rolls were available at www.dgemali.com. End Note.)

But the votes are out there

¶4. (C) To stay relevant in Malian politics, Treta conceded that the RPM needed allies in political circles and must energize grass roots political supporters. Treta insisted that the RPM's leader, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (IBK), was far more popular in the interior and among the more populous Bambara speakers in southern Mali than ATT, and that expatriate voters, particularly in France, would also back IBK (Note: 500,000 of the expected 6.5 million voters eligible to participate in the presidential balloting are living outside of Mali). He claimed most Malians in France were bitter because ATT had failed to extract more favorable immigrant and visa concessions for them from the French Government and would therefore vote overwhelmingly for IBK.

¶5. (C) Treta further piled on accusations that ATT introduced regionalism into Malian politics (ATT is from Mopti, to the north of Bamako) and planned to keep Mali under the thumb of northerners "for the next thirty years."

Even as "the Sphinx" rears its ugly head

¶6. (C) Treta readily provided the Embassy a local copy of a recently released book attacking ATT and his cronyism. The controversial book, "ATT-cratie: la promotion d'un homme et de son clan" (septel) has created a stir in the local press for its harsh criticism of the President and many (but not

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all) of the ministers and advisors close to him. The book, allegedly written by a former ATT minister using the name "Le Sphinx," was initially available only in France but is now being distributed in cheaply reproduced local versions by IBK and the RPM. RPM party headquarters appeared to have at least one box of the books.

¶7. (C) Comment: Treta's discourse reflects opposition sentiment towards ATT, and no doubt is a preview of the rhetoric the RPM and other opposition forces will use to attack the President during and after the campaign. ATT's evident strategy of isolating, and then politically destroying, IBK is classic hard-ball politics. Casting aspersions on ATT's long-term ambitions is equally typical mud-slinging; it remains to be seen if the mud sticks in the minds of the electorate. If true, it might prove more effective at creating fractures among ATT's allies in the long term, many who reportedly back ATT for the moment as the best way to further their own political and presidential ambitions, than rallying more support for the RPM.
McCulley